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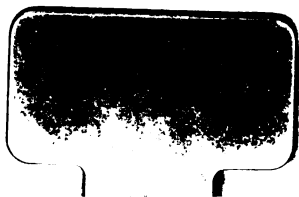
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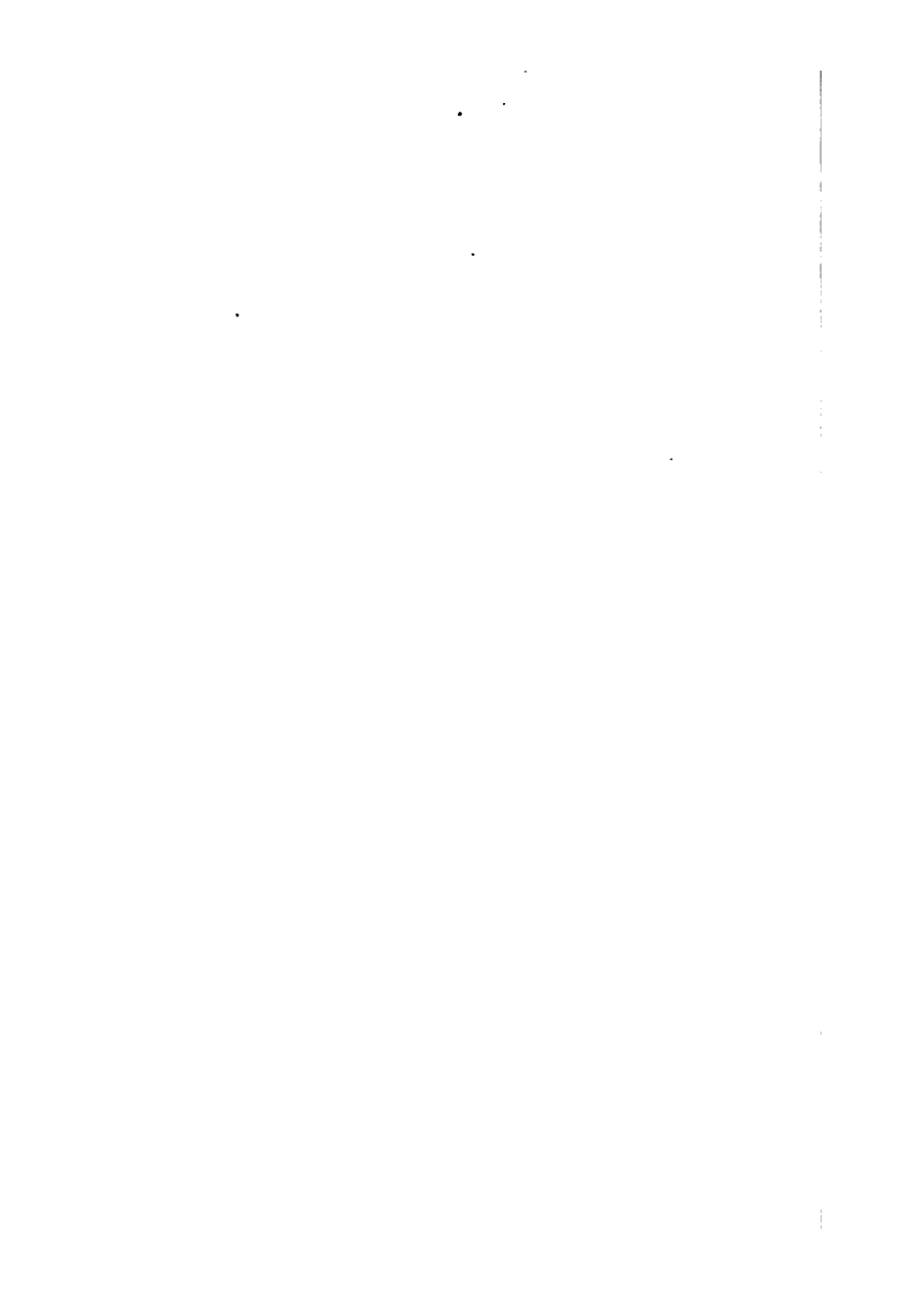
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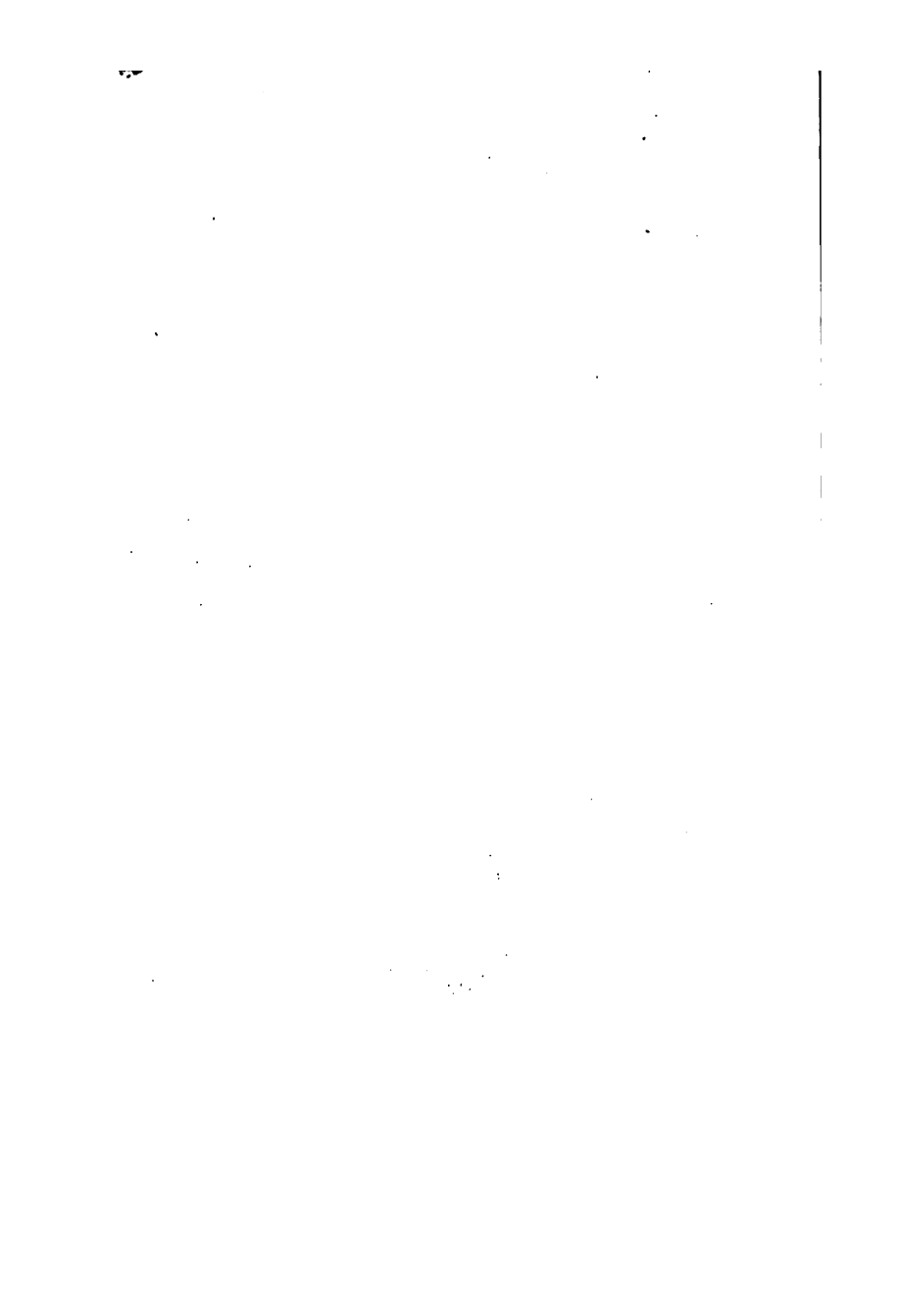
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**MEDITATION ON THE
SONG OF SOLOMON.**



A SIMPLE MEDITATION
ON THE
SONG OF SOLOMON.

BY
F. J. P.

"I speak concerning Christ and the Church."—*Eph. v. 32.*



LONDON:
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1874.

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TO MY HUSBAND

This Little Work

IS OFFERED.

A SMALL TOKEN OF THE DEEP RESPECT

INSPIRED BY HIS

UNCEASING LABOURS OF LOVE,

AND OF GRATEFUL AFFECTION FOR HIS

DEVOTED ATTACHMENT.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE following pages were written before their writer had perused any work on the subject. She is induced to publish them, from the hope that the comfort they gave her own soul may be felt by others. She is perfectly aware of their many imperfections; but "crumbs" are not despised by Him who numbers "the hairs of the head," and who blesses even a "cup of cold water" given in His Name who has "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."—Rev. i. 5, 6.

A note or two have been added from Durham's "Clavis Cantici," read afterwards.

CANNES, VAR., *May*, 1856.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION.

SOME friends expressing a wish to have this little work, I reprint it, hoping it may be useful to some who do not realise the practical lesson the Song contains.

In these days of *many* books, it seems almost superfluous, if not presumptuous, to add to the list; and time has not concealed the defects of this from their author—on the contrary. Still, as it was a comfort in bygone days of trial to write the thoughts as they arose, so again in a season of clouds has it proved the “silver lining” to ponder over and retouch the pages recording the assurances and comforts of God’s love.

CANNES, *July*, 1873.



A SIMPLE MEDITATION
ON THE
SONG OF SOLOMON.

Few parts of the Holy Word more touchingly interest the heart and mind than the Song of Songs. It opens up the deep fount of the feelings, and paints the close union between Christ and His church St. Paul describes in Ephesians v.

I desire to meditate on it. May the Spirit of Jesus give the understanding heart, the devoted soul, the resigned affections!

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

CHAPTER I.

Verses 1 to 17.

THE second verse of this chapter commences the Song, and announcing at once the happiness of Christ's love, marks it most emphatically as the portion of His peculiar people. Who but they can understand the holy effusions of this part of God's Word? The betrothment of Jesus and His Church is pictured by the symbol of the sacred kiss—type of affectionate union between two parties,—“Salute one another with an holy kiss” (Rom. xvi. 16); and His love pronounced “better than wine”—“wine that maketh glad the heart

of man " (Psa. civ. 15) ; by the genial influences, the animation, the energy it gives his physical being, thus making it a fit emblem of the experience of a soul tasting the love of Christ—" the love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost " (Rom. v. 5).

In the third verse " His name " is as ointment poured forth, attracting the love of the virgins (*i.e.*, the elect). And precious indeed is the name of our God-Saviour, " merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin ; " yet, as says the latter part of the seventh verse, " by no means clearing the guilty " (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7). The hardened Judas will find no balm of Gilead in that precious name ; but for those who cry, " Draw me ! " that ointment is the cure for every wound. And why will not all utter that cry ? Who can turn from these " bands of love " ? (Hosea xi. 4.) And

surely, as we ponder on this drawing, and view in it the attributes of the *Triune* Jehovah, we are lost in wonder, as in love. The Father draws (John vi. 44); the "lifted up" Saviour draws (John iii. 14; xii. 32); and the Spirit draws—He takes of the "things of Jesus" (John xvi. 16), and gently draws the sinner to contemplate in them the fulness of all that is calculated to make him rejoice. The redeemed go into the chambers of the King; they remember His love—*such love!*—and made "upright" by Him (Lev. xxvi. 13), love Him, "because he first loved them" (1 John iv. 19).

We have noticed this song is the believers' portion testifying to the undoubted assurance they have in the pardoning love of God, by the secret tokens of peace and union the bride receives from Him whose "love is better than wine." Still it is meet she, in truthful humility, revert to what she was.

In verse five she owns her deformity, yet sees, beneath the ravages of sin, she is comely, for God Himself created her in His own image; yea, rather, Christ, the Word of God, made her (John i. 2, 3), and for His own pleasure (Rev. iv. 11), and her "beauty must be perfect through His own comeliness which He had put upon her" (Ezek. xvi. 14), though obscured, vitiated, blackened by the noxious weeds of Satan. But tender care, wise chastenings, merciful corrections, will make the bride again fit for Him who finds her, like the polluted infant, "cast into the open field" (Ezek. xvi.). He "washes her with water," "anoints her with oil," "decks her with choicest ornaments" and makes her, all black and sunburnt "as the tents of Kedar," lovely as the "curtains of Solomon."

Still, in the eyes of the world, the bride is not lovely; though the time will come when the "daughters of Jerusalem" shall term her "fair-

est among women." But now the world comprehends not the blackness of the bride's exterior. How, indeed, when the holy Bridegroom was despised, rejected, hated, and no loveliness seen in Him! How could it, ought it, to be other with His bride? She, however, would fain enlighten them, both as to her blackness and the comeliness her Bridegroom has bestowed. She has no wish to conceal her sins—"in sin was she conceived"—nay, she would rather expose the state in which her Adamic birth has placed her, that so she might the more exalt Him who pitied her in her low estate, who raised her from keeping the vineyard of others, and converted to her greater bliss the humiliating circumstances in which the enemy of God and man had plunged her; avowing, also, that she alone had caused her own sad fall by the abuse of the noble gift of freedom she had received from her God.

Mother, in verse six, might denote the human

CHAPTER II.*

Verses 1 to 17.

THIS chapter opens with a pleasing description of the bride : a rose and a lily of the valley. Attractive emblems ! The queen of flowers, and that lovely, elegant, fragrant plant, whose modest bells shrink from exposure, and court the shade of their own bright shining leaves.

We see in this picture of the bride what Christ's love and care does for His chosen — how far

* Durham says : " It is clear Christ speaks in the two first verses of this chapter. So majestic the term, it can apply to none other. " I am the rose," &c. Also, " I," the possessive particle, claiming the bride ; and the bride's work is not to commend herself (p. 125). Christ draws His own beauty and the bride's together, thereby to show their kindred. He takes the two titles and gives one to her, with this difference, He is the " lily," she " as," or like the lily (p. 127).

In vol. iii. p. 271 of the " Christian Annotator," my rendering is adopted.

superior to the daughters of men. They are termed "thorns," and if the eye of faith acted as it ought, if man saw all things with its eye, he would discover no comeliness where God's Spirit has not cleansed and renewed the mind ; for, in truth, no unconverted being can be compared with a child of God. They are, in reality, as barren, displeasing, and hurtful as the "thorn ;" and happy would it be if the distinction here were closely heeded. The more the Divine precept, "Come out and be ye separate," is observed, the more of that peace is felt which is prepared for the "sons and daughters of the Almighty."

One remark may be suggested on the bride's calling herself "the rose,"—that it savours of conceit, self love, or vanity, to be as it were praising herself. False modesty is one of the usual falsities of the world: the bride, made good (Rom. xv. 14) by her God, is aware of her own state. She knows what He has done for

her ; therefore, in truthful simplicity, she acknowledges what His grace has made her. And why not ? Why not declare all God, our own God, has wrought *for* us and *in* us ?

The third verse compares the “beloved” to an apple tree, and how goodly is the comparison. Apples are refreshing and salubrious ; peculiarly cheerful also is the tree in blossom, with shade that invites to sit beneath the branches “with great delight !” And what a shadow for us is the Lord from the scorching heats of trial ! “He covers us in the shadow of his hand” (Isa. li. 16). And when our *souls* are wearied with the dry and barren land over which their pilgrimage leads them, is not Christ the refreshing principle of their spiritual life, as an apple is to the parched traveller of the desert ? Christ is our tree of life, and all who eat of Him are healed (Prov. xxii. 2, 14).

The fourth, fifth, and sixth verses describe the

relaxation enjoyed with a beloved object. The "banqueting house," where, the business of life cast aside, the mind pleases itself "with the feast of reason and the flow of soul;" when the intellect, unbending from the severity of study, yet enjoys the cultivation it has received; the banner of love waves over the festal board, sign of peace and joy; it is the feast of Jesus and His bride, united and rejoicing after the labours of the day. Sweet in prospect is this view, O how sweet will be the reality!

There is also a beautiful intimation of the closeness, the entireness, the *domesticity* of the union between Christ and the soul, and great are the wishes of the latter to partake of all the promises of God—the *God of love*!—of that God who took man's nature on Him, and says the heart of man shall be His abode (1 Cor. iii. 16). Can union be closer? And when taught of God to know something of this truth, does not the soul pant and

thirst for its fulness ? (Psa. xlii. 1, 2). As the affectionate heart of earth droops for the presence of its beloved, so is the soul "sick of love." "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." Beyond description, therefore, the meeting and resting together of loved ones is joyous ! And, encompassed by the arms of love, of eternal life and love, what wish has the bride ? She possesses the beloved of her heart, "the desire of her eyes." And while "his left hand is under her head, and his right hand embracing her, he sleeps ! " And she, watching Him with intense interest, charges the "daughters of Jerusalem" not to disturb her love till He pleases. No worldly occupations may enter when Christ visits the soul ; she must sit and wait on her Lord's pleasure. "Roes and hinds" are very timid animals, easily scared ; they are, therefore, probably selected to denote the extreme care with which the slightest disturbance should be avoided, the smallest of

earth's vanities dismissed, when Jesus visits the believer.

Jesus sleeping and the bride watching must intimate the patient waiting of believers on God,—"in patience possessing their souls." Human nature is averse to this ; it loves not to bide the Lord's time ; it would be ever anxious for something new. To watch a sleeping Jesus, and to keep all in submissive quietness around Him, is a lesson distasteful to man. And yet how great the privilege of watching by a "sleeping Jesus," fixing the mind on all He has done for us and been to us, thus keeping ourselves prepared for His awaking, and further teaching.

Verse eight. "The voice of the beloved." Swift of hearing is the bride when that voice sounds. Speedily does the ear catch the notes of a loved voice ! He is on the "mountains," "skipping on the hills," yet she hears that voice floating on the breeze ; and soon the loved one, with welcome

familiarity, stands "behind the wall," "showing himself at the lattice." Yes; He stands at the door and knocks (Rev. iii. 20). He bids His fair one to come away, the winter of gloom and storms is past, and the flowers of joy, and the singing of praises, and the light of love, and the voice of peace are abroad; and His fair one must go with Him, for without her all would be but as the dark coldness of mid-winter.

These verses are truly sweet. "The winter is past"—the cold barren season when sin closed the door to Christ; "the flowers appear"—the sweet fruits of the Spirit's care, when the power of the soul, touched by saving grace, can sing praises to the Lord, who rejoices in His work, and cannot be satisfied until His own are with Him. "Arise, my love, and come away."

The bride, however, appears to feel as Christians sometimes do, timid and retiring as the dove, and to have hid herself from the Beloved: a sense of

her worthlessness has come over her, and "the cleft of the rock," the "secret place," seem the most acceptable. But the tender Saviour wills not this, her modesty and humility but render her all the more precious in His eyes. He calls her His "dove," and tells her that he must see her countenance, and hear her voice, for it is sweet to His ears, and her face is comely in His eyes. What gentleness, what fondness! Jesus seeks us; Jesus will look upon us; Jesus will not be content without us. He has "graven us on the palms of his hands (Isa. xlix. 16); and the distrusts, the shortcomings, the infirmities of which we are but too conscious, and which oft-times would make us hide ourselves, are but stronger claims in His eyes for the love and the encouragement He never wearies to show. Oh, fathomless abyss of LOVE!

And having called forth His "dove," He tells her they must not be idle. They must take the

“foxes that spoil the vines,” the false teachers who “creep in,” leading the weak brethren captive. “False prophets” — (Ezek. xiii.) — these must be guarded against ; and the bride, sustained by the strength, inspired by the wisdom, of her Lord, must “take the foxes ;” and hearing the gracious words of the Beloved, she exclaims, rising from her timid bashfulness, “My beloved is mine, I *am* his !” Those alone cognizant of love know the import, feel the force of those few syllables, “He is mine, I *am* His.” When your soul can say that, then rejoice, O Christian ! for ever is that union. No change with God : “I, the Lord, change not” (Mal. iii. 6). Blessed assurance, true ground of joy, where all else changes ; but *that love* is everlasting, it accompanies its object everywhere.

“Through ev’ry changing scene, that constant love
Alike will make the happy object blest ;
Will ev’ry joy of active life improve,
And soothe its latest agonies to rest.”—*Mrs. Carter.*

bear is insupportable misery. Thus wanders the bride, self-convicted, self-condemned, yet anxiously desirous for a return of her happiness. She charges all she meets to tell her Beloved, if they see Him, that "she is sick of love." She longs He should know how deeply she suffers, for though believers slumber awhile and forget their privileges, they soon discover there is no peace or comfort, no hope or joy, when Christ is absent.

If the fulness of truth is wanting, if any meagre substitute endeavours to supply its place, the soul soon sickens for the real *love*, which *alone* satisfies. If "truth has set it free" (John viii. 32), truth, and truth alone, can keep it free, causing it to feel the "glorious liberty of the sons of God." But believers will not realise as they should all that truth teaches, therefore they go forth in their own strength, and "the prophets wound them" (Hosea vi. 5); on which, in

bitter anguish of soul, the beauties of Him whom they find not present themselves to their memory, and they would fain portray them to others, for on giving the daughters of Jerusalem her message to the Beloved, they naturally ask about Him, and desire to know what attractions He possesses to make Him such an object of her seeking. And mark here *the world*. It knows nothing of true affection, of the depth of the heart's real love; and finding an afflicted mourner, wonder why her tears flow so fast, and by their query intimate their own shallow feelings. "Why thus grieve? thy fondness may challenge other loves; what has thy Beloved more than others?"

This of itself deeply pains a sensitive heart. It casts a shade of disparagement, to say the least, on the lost one; and therefore warmly and energetically does the bride extol the charms and graces of the Beloved, to make Him known and valued, and to show that her lamentations and search are founded on right reason.

And what a glorious portraiture ! And is not Jesus lovely, “chiefest among ten thousand” ? Does not His head shine as gold ? and His eyes beaming with holy love, are they not soft and lucid as the dove’s ? The cheeks, distilling spices, are fragrant and cheering ; while His lips, dropping all “sweet smelling” words of life, give wisdom and love : in fine, He is altogether lovely. Jesus, Saviour of Thy people, Thou art indeed most precious. The hearts of Thy disciples burn within them when Thou art nigh. Thy bride longs after Thee with desires no human lips can utter ; and never more so than when all created objects fail, save to show the *nothingness* of even Thy own creation, which ever and anon seeks to usurp Thy place in her affections. So she sings :—

“I’ve found the pearl of greatest price,
My heart doth sing for joy ;
And sing I must, a Christ I have,
O what a Christ have I !

“ Christ is my meat, and Christ my drink,
My med'cine and my health,
My peace, my strength, my joy, my crown,
My glory and my wealth.

“ My Christ, He is the heaven of heaven,
My Christ, what shall I call?
My Christ is first, my Christ is last,
My Christ is All in All.”

CHAPTER VI.

Verses 1 to 13.

THE first verse of this chapter has furnished the text for many a beautiful discourse on the duty of believers to show forth their God, so as to win others to know and seek Him ; and “why should the Lord be a stranger in the land?” (Jer. xiv. 8.) Why should not all enjoy Him ? Alas ! many are the reasons for which He is disregarded. As of yore, so now, faces are hid from Him. He is despised ; there seems to be no beauty to make Him desirable, the Man of Sorrows ! (Isa. liii.) And if His own Shulamite rose not at His first call, she who had learnt so much of His love, how can those altogether in the dark be expected to turn towards Him ?

Ah, too often, the lukewarmness of His own is a stumbling-block in the way of others.

Most fruitful is this portion of the Bride's history. At one time her want of comeliness drew forth some contempt (chap. i.), now it appears the "daughters of Jerusalem" acknowledge her "fairness;" and how has this come about? Doubtless from the glowing feelings that give to her words and looks the animation that rises as she descants on all the glories and beauties of the Beloved! She now appears as "the light set on a hill," such as must be when Jesus is known, for however imperfect and infirm the flesh is, His character is disclosed in it, "the hope of glory." Of His fulness the loved of Jesus receive, and the reflex of these truths draws, even from the world, the exclamation, "Thou fairest among women."

Another lesson we learn is, that when she describes Jesus, the bride mentions only His

graces; she never alludes to other influences, of power, or terror, or grandeur. He is her "Beloved," in His own simple loveliness; and when we would win souls to Jesus, let us follow this example, and speak only of Jesus' love. Is not this the All in All?

When souls are truly born of God, and learn "the truth as it is in Jesus," let them beware of seeking other wisdom than that which is from above (James i. 5), which thoroughly furnishes us for every good work, and will enable us to carry it on in a spirit of love and humility, the "meekness of wisdom," the ever accompaniment of the *truths of God*. And we see how successful this proves, for the bride has the gratification of winning these daughters to search with her, and they soon find the Beloved. In her delight at again meeting Him, she exclaims, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine."

No human language can add force to these

words for hearts that feel them; no language can touch the heart that feels them not.

On the "daughters of Jerusalem" asking whether the Beloved had "turned aside," the bride seems to have recalled where He must be. The knowledge is often imparted that may make us useful to those whom we engage to seek Jesus. God will bless His children when in penitence they turn to Him, and bring others with them. The bride had suffered the "carnal mind" to prevail: she was punished, and thus awakened; at first her judgment was obscured by her sin; she sought not aright; she could not discern the Beloved. Her wandering soul, however, is not forsaken; and recounting all her Lord is, much returns to her mind, so that when asked where He was, she feels He must be in His garden, feeding amongst the lilies. And is not Jesus ever at this blessed work? It was His meat and drink to do the Father's will (John iv. 34).

Consequently the bride finds Him thus engaged ; and mark the way in which Jesus meets her—she, who had refused to open her door at His call, though His “locks were filled with the drops of the night,” is received without one upbraiding word, one frown of displeasure. On the contrary, delighted at her sight, rejoicing in her seeking Him, and knowing her own wickedness had brought its punishment and sufferings (Jer. ii. 19), He greets her by a magnificent outburst of praise, descriptive of her many graces. How overwhelmingly affected must have been the bride, how deeply reproached, that One, towards whom she had proved so cold, so ungracious, should meet her thus affectionately.

Believers may here gather encouragement, seeing the nature of real love, how mercy rejoices over judgment ; for though our God is just, and sin must bear its own penalty, yet far from our God is every wish to be severe on

those He has loved, even unto death. See Him with the guilty woman, "Neither do I condemn thee." View Him in the agonies of death, "Father, forgive them." Every step of His life was *Love*! And when He sees the trembling offender, "the contrite heart and the broken spirit," He sees nothing of the sin; it is put far out of His sight; the robe of His own righteousness meets His eye, marking His own people "his name, his praise, his glory" (Jer. xiii. 11). For what if these precious titles are rejected by the world, they are ever what His chosen ones are to Him; and the love and that glory will some day be seen in them, and *regrettingly* admired by those who have mocked and despised them. The "queens and the concubines" are summoned to attend the bride—the "forces of the Gentiles shall come to Zion, and all the earth shall know the Lord to be the Saviour of his people, the mighty one of Jacob" (Isa. lx. 16),

“and all shall be delighted with the abundance of his bride’s glory” (Isa. lxvi. 11).

I think we should not leave the description Christ gives of His bride, without some practical lessons. We find “comeliness and terror.” Thus with the love and meekness His people should have, they ought to shun all spurious charity, which only emanates from human weakness. In the correction of sin, in pulling out of the fire (Jude 23), they should *hate* even the flesh-spotted garment. Human weakness shrinks too often from legitimate correction, quailing beneath a false sentimentality on the view of suffering, however merited, and terming “censorious” all correction of evil. Yet a God of love will take vengeance, and wrath will overtake the wicked. Let the bowels of compassion go forth to reclaim, but let faithful correction be “terrible as an army with banners.”

Some difficulties present themselves on search-

ing into this song. Very much of it doubtless describes the believers' own experience of their spiritual life, while some parts are clearly prophetic. The latter portion of the third chapter we have noticed was anticipative, and in this sixth chapter there must be an allusion to the time when our Lord shall be known of all; and in the tenth verse may we not see some allusion to the second advent, when the Lord's satisfaction will be manifested at the completion of His elect, and the bride, the "Holy Jerusalem descending from God," "fair as the moon, clear as the sun," He will come into the midst of her, to see her fruits, and "be set on the chariots of his free and noble people, for the day of his power will have arrived, and his people in the beauty of holiness will be made willing" (Psa. cx. 8).

The thirteenth verse seems a call from without, to the Church, that she should return; it

is as though her graces had been discovered, and her return desired; and yet, "What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies." One of the most difficult verses to unriddle—two armies in the Church? Friendly, or hostile? The latter must be. And two warring elements ever exist in the Church militant. Satan, as an angel of light, wages war in her, and while on earth there will be the two conflicting powers, love and hatred. Whenever the Shulamite is called to come or to return, in her own bosom will the "two armies" be found. Thus she may ever sing—

"Far from home, I feel a longing;
Earth is but a barren clod;
While the storms are round me thronging,
Take, oh, take me home to God."

CHAPTER VII.

Verses 1 to 13.

“THE path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. iv. 18); and in the continuation of the praises of the bride we may note this fact. Portions only of her form were alluded to in the previous chapters, while in this not a feature or limb seem omitted. “How beautiful are thy feet with shoes;” and glorious is the sandal the bride puts on—the “preparation of the gospel of peace”—to make glad the hearts of those who see her traversing the mountains with missionary zeal, to carry far and wide the “good news.”

Throughout this description objects are selected expressive of riches, grace, dignity, and softness; closing with the persuasive eloquence which flows

from her lips, compared to the "best wine, which makes the ancients to speak," and causes those who hear to wake from the the lethargy of death. And when does Jesus find His bride the most lovely? When she is making Him known to others.

He pauses in His address (for it must be Jesus who recounts what His bride is), and ere proceeding it is well to note that, likening the bride to a palm-tree, Christ says, "I will go up to the tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts are as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples." Thus the graces originally from Christ are preserved by His communion. He does not give and then depart. No! He continues to hold her, and therefore she can be what the ninth verse tells; after which nothing can be more appropriate than her exclamation, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me." Very choice and significant are these words, "I am my beloved's." Jesus has made her His,

and therefore His desire is towards her. He has loved her with an everlasting love, and drawn her with lovingkindness. He has adorned her (Jer. xxxi.), and He rejoices in the work of His hands. His "love has covered all her sins" (Prov. x. 12); and that love has filled her with the "fulness of God" (Eph. iii. 16). We cannot wonder therefore at the description which has been given of the bride of Jesus. "The fulness of God" is her portion. And what does it produce? "Labours of love;" for she says, "Let us go forth to the fields; let us get up early to the vineyards, and watch over our fruits; and there I will give thee my loves." These last words might, one imagines, be more appropriately given to the Lord. Perhaps the uncertainty attending them denotes the oneness of mind between the soul and Christ. United in thought and in heart, one spirit animates both; the one desire for doing good, for saving others, is the constraining

motive ; and in these *labours of love* God meets and communes with the soul. "Loves" are exchanged, fragrant smells are emitted, and "all manner of pleasant fruits" are prepared for both. Jesus has no delights alone, nor has His bride. No wife has joys apart from the beloved. Such is genuine love ! Happy only are those who can say, " My beloved is mine."

"Sweet Jesus ! when I think on Thee,
My heart for joy doth leap in me ;
Thy love, my Saviour, ne'er can cloy,
Fountain of bliss, and source of joy !"

CHAPTER VIII.

Verses 1 to 14.

THE bride exclaims, "O that thou wert as my brother ! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee ; yea, I should not be despised."

The world ridicules the communion souls hold with God ; the bride expresses therefore the wish for a relationship which, enabling her to hold intercourse with her Beloved, would shelter her from those reflections a sensitive mind shrinks from. The shame of the cross she fears not : that she willingly bears ; but the deep heart-pourings of full affection, these she would conceal from the vulgar herd of scoffers : she would not "cast her pearls before swine." Perhaps we may see in visible Churches an answer to this

desire. There the faithful can meet their God-Saviour, unmolested by the jibes and sneers of the godless.

We find mention again of the mother's home, marking the purity of an approved affection. And again we find the entireness of the love of Jesus. "The everlasting arms of the eternal God (Deut. xxxiii. 27) are around her"—and "God is love" (John i. ; iv. 8, 16.) Ah! if we did but realise this; if we did but enter into the "height and depth, and length and breadth" of that love—its fulness, its power, its grace, its mercy, its activity. Ah! then we should be happy. "The arms of Jesus" preserving us from every ill, watching over us with jealous care, satisfied with the "travail of His soul," for He has laboured for us, He has loved us, He has cared for us, as never human love cared for its loved one; and yet earthly love is that whereby to "heavenly we ascend." It is indeed a "ray from

heaven," refines the soul and "heart enlarges;" and gives to those who hearken many a lesson. "From heaven it came, to heaven returneth." It teaches man *much*, and then quits him, that he may seek out, and live on, *that love which is eternal*; and as St. Paul uses the earthly as types of the heavenly union, so may we assist our minds, and by the images, however faint, of the former, nourish our souls, as regards the latter, and draw comfort therefrom.

When two beings are united by the mysterious "cord of love," how completely each dies to self, how entirely one mind absorbs both. How gladly sacrifices are made, troubles undergone, privations endured. Nothing is felt, nothing thought of, save what conduces to the well-being of the loved one—so intimately, so entirely are they knit up together, the slightest accident to the one vibrates in the other. And this exquisite song speaks not only of affection, as displayed in

the common walks of life, but carries into the most sacred retirements of love its heavenly purity, lighting on ground profane pens cannot venture on: for true love is purer than the "mountain sleet,"

"Ere from the cloud that gave it birth
It fell, and caught a stain of earth."

And when we see these actings of love in sinful humanity, how it raises man out of himself, ennobling, gracing, dignifying — how it seeks the good and happiness of the loved object; with what an entire security the bride may repose in the arms of her beloved, one with Him! and her soul may arise with songs of praise and thanksgiving. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Happiness is complete. Love is ours: we shall possess all that love gives — perfect felicity. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, what God has in store for us," but the Spirit reveals them in part. The Spirit takes of the

things of Jesus ! revealing our woes and His balm ; our sorrows and His comforts ; our emptiness and His fulness ; our poverty and His riches ; our nakedness and His robe of righteousness. Ah ! truly our souls have a foretaste of heaven ; they see the face of the Lord shining on them ; they feel the washing of the Spirit ; they taste the purity of love ; they feel the world nothing, and Jesus everything ; they know the love of God, for He shows " Himself altogether lovely ;" they pant after Him, not from dislike of their life below, but because He has revealed Himself as the object most to be desired ; He has inflamed their soul with love. And is not this an inkling ay, something more, of what God has prepared for us ? Truly it must be, for no *natural* man can pretend to it. If such a one pictures heaven, it is a heaven apart from holiness, a release it may be from suffering, but of nothing beyond the coarse satisfactions unconverted humanity knows.

While the bride of Jesus longs for heaven, because in the completion of love self is forgotten, the sight of the Beloved is all she covets—to enjoy God is the believer's heaven.

“What heights and depths of love divine
Will there through endless ages shine.”

Again the bride bids the daughters of Jerusalem not “to stir up;” no—in these sacred hours of union and communion with her Lord, nothing may interfere.

“To feel His power, to hear His voice,
To taste His love, is all her choice.”

And not even the “daughters of Jerusalem,” the apparently most innocent or pleasing of earth's attractions, are “to stir;” nothing may disturb the sublime intercourse with Jesus.

The fifth verse points to the “coming out of the world.” “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved?” Our wilder-

ness state: what is the world but such, without the Lord as our guide? The margin is significant. "A place without order, of little worth;" and are not the "foundations of the earth out of course" (Psa. lxxxii. 5), for good and lovely; and a "pleasant portion" as earth was, man soon made "it a desolate wilderness" (Jer. xii. 10), for his sin drove the Lord from it, and it became foul and unclean. From this wilderness believers must come up, and in no other way can they come up but by leaning on Him who overcame all the "temptations of the wilderness," decked as they were by every allurements to the natural man. But the Son of man overcame; so must His bride. She also must withstand the world, the flesh, and the devil. She must come forth and be separate. She must not touch the unclean thing. She must, leaning on Jesus, do as He did, overcome!

And this coming up is at once followed by a

declaration of electing grace—"I raised thee up under the apple tree ; there thy mother brought thee forth." "Dust thou art ; from the ground wast thou taken " (Gen. iii. 19). Earth was thy mother, by the apple thou didst fall ; but I had pity on thee, and from that "low estate I raised thee."

Divine love saw—may we not say *foresaw*—the offence, and provided the remedy (Eph. i. 4) ; and here one could much desire to search into this deeply mysterious subject—baffling as it does the finite intelligence of even the wisest and the best. Still, where is the mind that refrains from some researches, though obliged to arrive at the conclusion they can nothing discover, save some palpable facts. Man is found to be a corrupted being, and the word of God declares him so to be, and that such he became by the act of Adam's disobedience, which placed him under the tyranny of sin, and its author Satan, so that they ruled,

and he was the "servant of sin" (Rom. vi.); so tied, so shackled, that by no effort of his own could he free himself. Thus is every being, by that which is termed *nature*. The varying effects of sin we find in the Scriptures, and in every history of mankind. We see some escaping its power—Abel is termed "righteous"—Enoch walked with God—Abraham was called His friend—Moses turned from the enticements of the world—and ever are there the seven thousand who bow not the knee to Baal!

What can we say to these things? "Christ the Saviour of all men"—"God willeth not the death of the sinner, but that all should be saved"—Jerusalem addressed as one who would *not* be gathered under the wings of the most High! Here we see man's free will addressed. Again comes the opposite side of this truth (Rom. ix.), "that the purpose of God according to election might stand—so then it is of God." And Paul,

vainly endeavouring to clear up this wonderful mystery, is driven to the exclamation that winds up the following chapter—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."

The experiences of believers must vary—none should fear, and cease from striving to enter the strait gate. They feel their impotence to break the bands of sin, but God promises that truth shall free them, and if Jesus is sought the promise is fulfilled. Sooner or later, the prisoner of Satan is made the free man of God in Christ—God reveals Himself in all love and wisdom,—His Spirit washes and makes clean,—the Cross is displayed on Calvary, and the glories purchased through the sufferings culminating on it of the Lamb of God come forth in bold relief. Man is taught by every precept in God's Word, by every working of the Blessed Spirit, how to cherish the

“unspeakable gift” he has received — how his weakness is made his strength, and how he is left without an excuse if he make not his “calling and election sure.” Such a one will be righteously condemned, yea, “out of his own mouth,” as our Lord says. The blood of Jesus enables God to be just, and to justify the sinner. “By grace are ye saved:” no work, no merit, free grace. Who can doubt this? All born in sin, only pardoned by the one act of Love—but the pardoned child must be obedient. (See 1 Cor. x.) And be assured every believer must co-operate with God’s Spirit, and follow Paul as he followed Christ (1 Cor. xi.) Here we halt, for, as Burnet expresses it, “on what views did God form His purposes and decrees concerning mankind” must remain hid, till such times as our earth-hood is finished, and then God’s ways will be found perfect. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Christ frees from sin, and it is abiding with Him preserves man from evil, for there is no other means of cure, no other refuge against any of the effects of sin, than by a constant cleaving to the ever blessed Saviour, and feeling this our "life is hid with him in God." Well, therefore, is it for his bride to exclaim, "Set me as a seal on thine heart, and on thine arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy cruel as the grave"—a very striking antithesis. She knows what love God in Jesus has manifested; she knows her responsibility; and that, strong as is love, jealousy is cruel and hard as the grave, which "swallows up alive," and never says, "It is enough" (Prov. i. 12; xxx. 16). Therefore the loving though trembling bride clings to her Beloved, for only with Him can she escape the terrors of a "consuming fire." *Alone* how could she approach One who can never look on guilt? for justice must resent the "neglect of the great

salvation ;" and it is "living without God" when man separates himself in any degree from Jesus. He must be the Alpha and Omega, the All in All. Closely, therefore, she clings, and feels "many waters cannot quench love." She has proved this love ; poor and feeble she has found herself to be, but leaning on Him, she can "fight the fight," and "run the race," for He is by her side ; and she delights in the love whose sacred influences make the laws of God laws of pleasure to her renewed heart, for *there* Christ placed them when He breathed His image into Adam on creation's dawn ! That love was Christ's free gift. It was not purchased. Nothing can purchase love. Love is a gift ! Love spurns the idea of being bought ! Jesus gave love ! His bride must love ! And love fulfils all law. The heart's affection can never be bought ! The sweet cords of love are touched by agents of whom we know nothing. We are conscious of

its presence—its influences ; but, like the Spirit, we cannot tell whence they come, or whither they go. What a proof of its divinity ! Well may the bride feel an assurance in that love, which, “all love excelling,” has delivered her, and will, if she “be faithful unto death, give her a crown of life” (Rev. ii. 10) ; for she will be “changed from glory to glory” (2 Cor. iii. 18), till that crown is cast before His throne, who alone is worthy to receive all glory (Rev. iv. 10).

Turn we now to the latter verses, and see what the “little sister” may typify. Some say she is intended to represent the Gentile nations. The Shulamite, representing the Church of Jerusalem, receives more privileges, an idea assisted by St. Paul in his eleventh chapter of Romans. Other Scriptures place all believers on a like footing. There is neither Jew nor Greek, but all “one in Christ.” My idea is the “little sister” portrays the nations who, never

hearing of Christ, will be judged by the *law of nature*, they not having the law, being “a law unto themselves.” And “the little sister having no breasts” might incline to this idea: she could not, with the Old or New Israel, give “the breasts of consolation” (Isaiah lxvi. 11), though there is the hope expressed in her favour that she may become a wall—Christ visited the spirits in prison (1 Peter iii. 19)—and should she be but a door, she will be made valuable. The bride calls herself a “wall, and her breasts towers, so she was in his eyes as one that found favour.” She had by His grace been renewed and quickened, till His image in her made her altogether lovely, and she was satisfied with this likeness (Psa. xvii. 15). “Love grows by what it feeds on.” The bride had fed on the “bread from heaven,” and thus, “bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh,” she was to be one with Him. But ere winding up her tale, she observes

on the waiting for her Lord, and points to the need of diligence in working, and that her vineyard must give him a "thousand," and those who keep it "two hundred." The first and best fruits are for the beloved, though the under shepherds are to live of their labour, to be cared for as His servants. Here are seen the labours of all believers, to prepare for their Lord's return, and here the Song and the Gospel parables go hand in hand; no idleness, but occupation. "Work while it is day." This need not be dwelt on.

In the earlier part of the Song the Bride complains she had not kept her own vineyard (chap. i). Here she says: "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." In former days truly the faithless bride had suffered the beasts of the field to destroy it, but the Jewish bride was merged in the Christian, and the gracious Lord when on earth formed a new vineyard for her,

restored His promises, renewed His covenant, and placed power, the power of doing good, the power of a loving obedience, in the hands of His forgiven bride.

And now the tale is summed up, with the same hopes as those expressed by the beloved disciple in the Isle of Patmos, who on closing the glorious visions of the future, exclaimed, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; and the Spirit and the bride say, Come." So here: "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart on the mountain of spices!"

And does not every child of God, when Jesus has been apprehended as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, echo the same!

The sorrows and disappointments, the heart-achings and heart-burnings, should *not* be mingled in the wish to "depart, and be with Christ." Rather let the desire be kindled by the

having tasted of the graciousness of our heavenly Father, by the knowledge of our own deceitful hearts, and the dangers of the way. In a word, let the *experimental* knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus Christ raise the cry, "Come, Lord, come quickly." "Amen and Amen."

"Why should we start or fear to die?
Death is the gate of endless joy."

Watts.

And can we not hear the bride sweetly singing:—

"Clasped in my heavenly Saviour's arms,
I would forget my breath,
And lose my life among the charms
Of so divine a death!"

"Farewell, mortality,

Jesus is mine!

Welcome, eternity,

Jesus is mine!

Welcome, ye scenes of rest,

Welcome, ye mansions blest,

Welcome, a Saviour's breast,

Jesus is mine!"

NOTE TO CHAPTER VIII.

OF the well-known Evangelical minister Simeon, of Cambridge, it is said his truly upright mind seems never to have been disturbed by speculative difficulties. Steering between Arminianism and Calvinism, he seemed to approach as near truth as finiteness can. Preserving man's free will and liability to fall quite away, he yet maintained the perseverance of the children of God, and considered these apparent contradictions as containing much *propriety* and *necessity*, for these truths are subservient one to the other. "God elects," but carries His purpose into effect by the free agency of man, which is altogether influenced by rational considerations. So also God carries on and completes His work in our souls, by causing us to feel our proneness to apostatize, and by making us to call daily for more grace, thus consulting His own glory and our good, teaching us to combine humility with earnestness, and vigilance with composure.

In a letter to the Rev. Carus Wilson, he writes :—

1st. A man may fall from a state of grace—*i.e.*, there is

nothing in him that is in its own nature indefectible, and that warrants him to say, he *cannot* fall, and fall *finally* too.

2nd. This being true of man in his best estate, it must a portion be true when he is fallen.

3rd. That as to any secret decrees which God may have formed in His secret counsels, they can give confidence to no man who is not persevering in ways of holiness.

4th. That inasmuch as the counsels of heaven must stand, the consideration of past mercies may excite our gratitude and hope, but must be no reason for a relaxation of our diligence, which would at once demonstrate that we had deceived our souls.

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